

basi-sphenoid yet remains open, while it appears to be closed in the New York skull. The specimen is about the same size as the latter, its length being $10\frac{1}{2}$ inches. In addition to the two localities indicated, the remains of this most gigantic of all rodents, recent and extinct, have been found in New York, Ohio, South Carolina, Tennessee, Mississippi and Louisiana.

September 24th.

MR. CASSIN, Vice-President, in the Chair.

Sixteen members present.

Chas. H. Thomas, M. D., and A. G. Hincle, M. D., were elected members, and Rev. Alphonso Wood, Brooklyn, N. Y., was elected a correspondent.

On favorable report of the respective committees, the following were ordered to be published:

Additional Note on Dioicous forms of VITIS VINIFERA, L.

BY THOMAS MEEHAN.

On page 42 of the Proceedings of the Academy, I offered a few observations tending to show that the idea of De Candolle (since adopted by others), that Dioicousism was a peculiar attribute of the American species of *Vitis* and Hermaphroditism of the European was an error, and one which, as it had been adopted as a fact to divide the genus, ought to be corrected; and further, I suggested that the seedless grapes of Europe (currants) were probably pistillate forms. This has produced two letters from Dr. George Engelman, of so much interest that, with his knowledge, I make the following extracts:

"It is a well known fact that *Vitis vinifera*, when running wild, as it occurs in different localities on the banks of the Rhine, becomes polygamous; and I have specimens of male plants in my herbarium. The berries are small, acerb, and dark bluish-black.

The same, I have learnt from Prof. Parlatore, of Florence, grows in the swampy region near Leghorn, and is as large a plant there as our largest *V. cordifolia* (or *viparia*),—a hundred feet high, and (stem) six or eight inches in diameter,—and is there yet called "Labrusca" by the natives,—the ancient name used also by Virgil and Pliny, showing the same plant to be wild (native or naturalized?) at their time. This is also said by Prof. Parlatore to be dioicous, or rather polygamous.

The number of seeds does not depend on the fertility of the plant, but on the size of the berry; thus our small berries, *V. cordifolia* (*viparia*), bear usually one or two seeds, rarely (if ever) more.

The question with me is whether the plant is ever properly dioicous? I have never found female plants. All that I could examine were either male or hermaphrodite, though the hermaphrodite may not be absolutely perfect,—that is, though the pollen is perfect, it may require the pollen of another (male or hermaphrodite) plant to fertilize it.

Has any one seen purely female plants?

Your hypothesis of the seedless currants I cannot share. If not impregnated, the fruit will come to nothing; but there are seedless varieties of different plants you know."

In another letter, in reply to some suggestions of mine, Dr. Engelman adds: "I was too hasty in saying that a non-fertilized fruit would not ripen. Those with a fleshy calyx (epigynous) often do, without producing seeds; but of grapes I would doubt it. And, moreover, I do not know—and would like botanists to look to it—whether female flowers are found in *Vitis*! I find only complete, or male plants,—have never seen a purely female. If no one has, will they look out next season?"

[Sept.

These extracts confirm my views in reference to the existence of imperfect forms of *Vitis vinifera*, and they open up an interesting inquiry as to the cause of seedless raisins. One of our fellow members suggests that my hypothesis that they are pistillate forms, imperfectly developed through lack of fertilization, is unlikely, because, with so many vineyards of perfect grapes, at times some of these would get fertilized from stray pollen, and thus we should occasionally find seeds in dried corinths, which we do not. But old writers on the corinth say that berries with seeds are found at times amongst the others, in which case they are double the size (see Prince's Treatise on the Vine, pages 97, 98, copied probably from Duhamel). They are perhaps rejected when the currants are being prepared.

However, the object of my note was to refer to the *fact* of the existence of male plants; and the hypothesis in reference to the seedless grapes was introduced rather to stimulate inquiry as to what the facts really are in relation to their real nature and organization.

Description of an apparently new species of OWL, of the Genus SCOPS.

BY D. G. ELLIOT, F. L. S., F. Z. S., ETC.

SCOPS KENNICOTTII.

Head and upper parts light rufous-brown, each feather having a central streak of brownish-black, and also barred with the same color. The rufous-brown hue lightest on the lower part of the neck, where it is almost a buff. The outer feathers of the interscapulars have the outer webs light buff, forming a distinct bar. Wings same color as the back, but the central streak broader. Primaries dark brown, outer webs marked with distinct spots of light buff, slightly discernible on the inner. Secondaries blackish-brown, outer webs distinctly spotted with dark buff. Tertiaries mottled with light buff and black. Ear tufts light buff, with a central streak of black, and barred with the same; broadest on the outer webs. Feathers around the eye reddish-brown; those covering the nostrils soiled white, with black shafts. Concealed patches of white feathers equidistant between the ear-tufts and the ears. Upper part of breast light buff; several feathers on each side having very broad central streaks of black, forming together a conspicuous spot; the rest have this mark much narrower, and the black bars either nearly obsolete, or mere wavy lines. Feathers of the flanks light buff, with a broad line of black in the middle, and a conspicuous bar of pale yellowish-white near their tips. Centre of abdomen and under tail coverts yellowish-white, a few indistinct brown bars on the latter. Feathers of tarsi reddish-brown; of feet yellowish-white. Bill black, white at tip. Claws chestnut at base, rest black.

Total length 11 inches; wing $7\frac{1}{4}$ in., tail 4 in., bill $\frac{7}{8}$ in. along the curve, claws $\frac{1}{2}$ in.

Hab.—Sitka.

The general hue of this curious little owl is a reddish-brown, mottled and blotched with black. In size it is between the *Scops Asio* and *Otus Wilsonianus*, and is not unlike what a cross between these species might be supposed to resemble. It, however, bears very distinctive characters, which free it from any such suspicion, among which, and not the least, is the curious concealed tuft of white feathers just above the ears.

The specimen was procured at Sitka by the expedition engaged in laying the telegraph which is to connect the two great continents of America and Asia, and is one of the most interesting additions which the indefatigable naturalists attached to this band of zealous workers have made to the Avi fauna of North America.

The example from which my description is taken is unique, and belongs to the Academy of Natural Sciences of Chicago, by the kindness of whose officers 1867.]